

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR THE AI ERA

# The AI-Ready Lawyer



5 Pillars of AI-Ready Lawyering    20 Competencies    3 Proficiency Levels

**Practising Law Institute (PLI) Innovation Council  
& Professional Development Consortium**

This is a living document. Planned review cycle: annually, with interim updates as needed.

## Introduction

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how legal services are delivered, learned, and evaluated. For those entering the profession today, AI is not a future consideration but a present reality. Large language models are already embedded in the research platforms, document review systems, and drafting workflows used daily across legal employers of all types and sizes.

Yet the profession lacks a shared vocabulary for what AI competency looks like in practice. The ABA has issued foundational ethical guidance through Formal Opinion 512, which makes clear that the duty of competence under Model Rule 1.1 now encompasses an obligation to understand the benefits and risks of AI. Over 30 state bars have released AI-specific rules. Some law firms have launched AI training curricula. But no consensus model exists that defines the specific knowledge, skills, and behaviors that attorneys need to develop, or how to measure their progress.

This framework proposes such a model. It is built on a core conviction: AI competency is not optional. It is becoming part of what it means to practice law competently. This is not aspirational language. It reflects the direction of ethical rules, client expectations, and professional standards across the profession.

The framework is organized around Five Pillars of AI-Ready Lawyering, a progression-based framework that moves from foundational AI understanding through practical application, quality oversight, ethical governance, and professional evolution. The five pillars each contain 3-5 specific competencies, described across three proficiency levels.

Critical thinking and oversight are not skills that come after AI application, but are foundational to it. While the pillars are numbered sequentially for organizational clarity, Pillars 2 (AI-Enhanced Legal Work) and 3 (Critical Oversight) operate simultaneously in practice. A lawyer should never apply AI to legal work without simultaneously engaging in the oversight and verification that responsible use demands.

This framework does not replicate other structures designed by leading experts to date. Instead, it asks a different question: what new and transformed competencies does AI demand, and how should we organize and measure them?

## Learning Objectives

This framework is designed to help legal professionals and the institutions that support them achieve the following outcomes:

- **Understand** how AI technologies work, what they can and cannot do, and why they sometimes fail, at a level sufficient to use them responsibly in legal practice.
- **Apply** AI tools effectively to legal research, drafting, investigation, and client service while maintaining the craft and judgment that lawyering demands.
- **Verify** all AI-generated work product through structured, repeatable methodology that treats oversight as a skill to be developed, not merely an obligation to be acknowledged.
- **Navigate** the ethical, regulatory, and governance landscape surrounding AI in legal practice, including confidentiality, disclosure, bias, and client-specific requirements.
- **Evolve** as a professional by building the uniquely human skills that AI cannot replicate, staying current with rapid technological change, and contributing to the profession's collective learning.

## How to Use This Framework

This framework is designed to serve multiple audiences:

| AUDIENCE                               | HOW TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Legal Educators</b>                 | Map AI competencies to curriculum; design courses that build skills progressively across the five pillars                                              |
| <b>Professional Development</b>        | Build training programs, evaluation criteria, and mentoring frameworks organized around these competencies; identify gaps in current offerings         |
| <b>Hiring Committees</b>               | Develop interview questions and assessments that evaluate AI readiness alongside traditional legal skills                                              |
| <b>Law Students and Attorneys</b>      | Self-assess current levels; identify development priorities; track growth over time                                                                    |
| <b>Bar Associations and Regulators</b> | Inform CLE requirements and ethical guidance on AI competency; support the development of standards for AI integration in legally substantive training |
| <b>In-House Legal Departments</b>      | Benchmark team capabilities; develop outside counsel guidelines; plan training investments                                                             |
| <b>Clients and Legal Operations</b>    | Set expectations for outside counsel AI capabilities; develop informed AI use guidelines                                                               |

*For stakeholder-specific recommendations on how to implement this framework, see the Stakeholder Recommendations section at the end of this document.*

## The Five Pillars: Overview

The framework is organized as a learning progression, with each pillar building on the one(s) before it. Note that Pillars 2 and 3 are practiced simultaneously—responsible AI-enhanced legal work requires critical oversight from the start.

| PILLAR                                   | FOCUS                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Understand: AI Fluency</b>         | Know the technology, its capabilities, and its limits                       |
| <b>2. Apply: AI-Enhanced Legal Work</b>  | Integrate AI into research, drafting, investigation, and client service     |
| <b>3. Verify: Critical Oversight</b>     | Check, question, and quality-control everything AI produces                 |
| <b>4. Govern: Ethical AI Governance</b>  | Navigate confidentiality, compliance, data governance, bias, and disclosure |
| <b>5. Evolve: Professional Evolution</b> | Adapt, learn continuously, and lead in a changing profession                |

**A note on the progression:** While the pillars are presented sequentially, real professional development is not strictly linear. An individual might be at a Leading level in AI Fluency but Emerging in Ethical AI Governance. Most importantly, Pillars 2 and 3 operate in parallel: every time a lawyer uses AI to perform legal work (Pillar 2), they should simultaneously be exercising critical oversight (Pillar 3). The progression reflects a logical learning path, not a rigid prerequisite chain.

## Three Proficiency Levels

Each competency is described across three progressive levels. These are not rigid stages tied to specific timeframes, but serve as points on a developmental continuum. Progression depends on intentionality, training quality, and depth of engagement—not on how long someone has had access to AI tools. Some lawyers may advance quickly with focused effort; others may remain at the Emerging level longer before making progress.

For lawyers who have not yet meaningfully engaged with AI tools, the Emerging level represents the entry point. The framework assumes willingness to engage, but recognizes that a significant portion of the profession is still at an awareness stage.

| LEVEL             | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Emerging</b>   | Grasps core concepts and can identify when the competency is relevant. Applies it with guidance and supervision. Beginning to build practical experience through structured, low-risk experimentation.                                                                        |
| <b>Practicing</b> | Applies the competency independently in common situations. Integrates it into regular work with growing confidence. Makes informed decisions about when and how to use AI in professional tasks.                                                                              |
| <b>Leading</b>    | Applies the competency in complex and novel situations. Teaches others, shapes organizational practices, and contributes to the broader professional conversation through writing, speaking, mentoring, and thought leadership both within and beyond their own organization. |



## Pillar 1: AI Fluency

Understand AI technology well enough to use it responsibly, choose the right tools, and recognize when it falls short. Critical thinking about AI begins here. Fluency is not just knowing how to use a tool, but understanding it well enough to question its outputs and make informed decisions about when and how to apply it.

| COMPETENCY                          | EMERGING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | PRACTICING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | LEADING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Foundational AI Knowledge</b>    | Understands key concepts including how large language models generate output, the role of training data, context windows, temperature settings, and the difference between probabilistic and deterministic systems. Can describe in plain language why AI sometimes produces incorrect information. Has a functional understanding of core terms: RAG, agentic AI, model vs. system. | Can explain foundational concepts clearly to colleagues; understands how different AI architectures affect output reliability; adjusts tool behavior for different tasks based on technical understanding.                                                                                                      | Evaluates new AI architectures and tools as they emerge; explains technical concepts clearly to colleagues and clients; contributes to organizational decisions about AI adoption based on technical understanding.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Effective AI Interaction</b>     | Writes basic prompts and recognizes that prompt quality directly affects output quality. Understands the concept of structured interaction with AI systems. Begins to see AI as a potential thought partner for stress-testing arguments and surfacing counterarguments, not only as a tool for generating finished work product.                                                    | Crafts structured, context-rich prompts using techniques like role-setting and multi-step reasoning; iterates to refine outputs; adapts prompting strategies based on the specific tool and task. Engages AI as a dialogue partner to challenge reasoning, explore alternative framings, and sharpen arguments. | Designs reusable prompt templates for common legal tasks; trains colleagues on advanced interaction strategies; contributes to organizational prompt libraries. Develops and teaches interaction strategies that include sophisticated thought-partnering techniques, helping colleagues go beyond task delegation to deeper analytical dialogue with AI. |
| <b>Tool Awareness and Selection</b> | Knows what AI tools their employer provides and/or permits, and their basic intended uses. Understands the difference between approved and unapproved tools.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Compares tools against specific tasks to choose the best fit; evaluates whether an AI tool should be used based on potential time saved and likelihood of accurate output; provides informed input during tool evaluation processes.                                                                            | Leads or contributes to tool procurement decisions; benchmarks tools against practice-specific needs and security requirements; evaluates vendor claims critically.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Recognizing AI Failure Modes</b> | Knows that AI can hallucinate citations, produce biased outputs, and generate plausible-sounding but incorrect analysis. Understands that confident-sounding AI output is not necessarily accurate.                                                                                                                                                                                  | Identifies common failure patterns in practice; understands when high AI confidence does not equal accuracy; can predict which types of tasks are more likely to produce unreliable output.                                                                                                                     | Develops testing protocols and guardrails for catching AI failures; contributes to organizational quality assurance standards; shares failure-mode knowledge systematically.                                                                                                                                                                              |

## Pillar 2: AI-Enhanced Legal Work

Integrate AI into daily legal practice to produce better work product while preserving the craft and judgment of lawyering. This pillar operates simultaneously with Pillar 3 (Critical Oversight): every application of AI to legal work should be accompanied by the verification and quality-control practices described in the next pillar.

| COMPETENCY                                              | EMERGING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | PRACTICING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | LEADING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AI-Assisted Research</b>                             | Can use AI research tools to generate starting points for legal research, then verifies results using established methods.                                                                                                                                  | Creates efficient research workflows; benchmarks AI research quality against traditional methods for different question types; recognizes when AI research is insufficient.                                                                                                        | Designs research strategies that combine AI and traditional tools based on the nature of the question; establishes team-level research protocols.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>AI-Assisted Drafting and Review</b>                  | Uses AI to generate initial drafts or spot issues in documents, then applies legal judgment to edit and refine.                                                                                                                                             | Integrates AI drafting into regular workflow while maintaining control over structure, strategy, and nuance; adapts AI outputs to match organization's voice and client expectations.                                                                                              | Builds drafting templates and workflows that teams can reuse; establishes quality benchmarks for AI-assisted documents across practice areas.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>AI-Assisted Investigation and Analysis</b>           | Understands that AI can assist with pattern-finding in large document sets, cross-referencing testimony, and synthesizing factual information across sources.                                                                                               | Uses AI to support factual investigation in discovery, due diligence, and document review; identifies patterns and inconsistencies that manual review might miss; integrates AI findings with traditional investigative methods.                                                   | Designs AI-assisted investigation workflows for complex matters; establishes protocols for using AI in discovery and large-scale document analysis; benchmarks AI investigation tools against manual methods.                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Client and Stakeholder Service and Communication</b> | Understands that AI can improve responsiveness and deliverables, but that communication remains a fundamentally human task. Recognizes that those receiving legal services have varying levels of comfort with AI-assisted legal work.                      | Uses AI to draft status updates, summarize developments, and prepare client-ready materials more efficiently while maintaining personal touch and judgment. Communicates transparently with clients and stakeholders about AI use when appropriate.                                | Develops best practices for AI-enhanced client communications; advises on how to discuss AI use with clients and stakeholders with varying levels of familiarity with AI; helps shape client and stakeholder expectations around AI-assisted services.                                                                             |
| <b>Workflow Integration</b>                             | Begins incorporating AI into discrete tasks within an existing workflow. Begins to recognize which tasks and subtasks are appropriate to delegate to AI versus which require direct human handling based on the nature of the work and the stakes involved. | Redesigns personal workflows to include AI at appropriate points; tracks improvements in quality and efficiency. Makes deliberate decisions about what to delegate to AI, how to frame the delegation clearly, and how to retain meaningful control over the overall work product. | Designs team-level AI-integrated workflows; leads process improvement initiatives; shares effective workflows across the organization. Develops delegation frameworks for the team, helps colleagues calibrate the right level of AI involvement for different task types, and models how to delegate without abdicating judgment. |

## Pillar 3: Critical Oversight

Maintain the rigorous verification, independent thinking, and quality standards that responsible AI use demands. This pillar operates simultaneously with Pillar 2. Oversight is not a step that comes after application, but a discipline that accompanies every use of AI in legal work. Verification is a structured, teachable methodology, not merely an obligation to acknowledge.

| COMPETENCY                                | EMERGING                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | PRACTICING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | LEADING                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Verification and Quality Assurance</b> | Understands the obligation to independently verify all AI-generated content before relying on it, including citations, facts, and legal analysis. Can identify when AI output is clearly inadequate for professional use. | Applies systematic verification methods consistently: checks citations against primary sources, validates factual claims and legal reasoning, and applies professional quality standards. Knows when AI output needs minor refinement versus fundamental rework. | Develops verification checklists and protocols for the team; identifies subtle errors that less experienced reviewers would miss; sets quality benchmarks for AI-assisted work that others can use as evaluation rubrics. |
| <b>Preserving Independent Judgment</b>    | Understands the risk of anchoring bias when reviewing AI-generated analysis, and that AI should support rather than replace legal thinking.                                                                               | Routinely forms independent views before consulting AI; uses AI as a check on personal analysis rather than a substitute for it; rigorously reconciles differences between own analysis and AI output.                                                           | Models and mentors independent thinking practices; designs training approaches that strengthen judgment alongside AI fluency; helps others recognize and resist over-reliance on AI.                                      |
| <b>Supervising AI-Assisted Work</b>       | Understands that supervising attorneys are responsible for all work product, regardless of whether AI was involved in creating it. Documents AI involvement in work product as required.                                  | Reviews AI-assisted work with appropriate rigor; flags potential issues for supervisors; applies verification protocols consistently.                                                                                                                            | Develops review standards for AI-assisted work; advises supervisors on what to look for when reviewing AI-assisted output; trains others on effective oversight practices.                                                |



## Pillar 4: Ethical AI Governance

Navigate the rapidly evolving rules, risks, and professional responsibilities that AI introduces to legal practice.

| COMPETENCY                                     | EMERGING                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | PRACTICING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | LEADING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Confidentiality and Data Protection</b>     | Understands that entering data into AI tools may breach confidentiality obligations; follows organizational policies on which tools and data are approved; distinguishes between employer-approved and unapproved tools. | Evaluates AI tools for data handling practices before use; raises concerns about potential data exposure; applies organizational and professional standards to all AI interactions involving client information.                                                   | Assesses new tools for security and confidentiality risks; advises colleagues on safe data practices.                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Data Governance and Client Requirements</b> | Understands that clients may have specific requirements for AI use through outside counsel guidelines; knows to check for client restrictions before using AI on a matter.                                               | Navigates client-specific AI restrictions systematically; maintains awareness of which clients have which requirements; evaluates AI vendor data processing terms; identifies cross-border data considerations when AI processes information across jurisdictions. | Contributes to organizational data governance policies; develops organizational systems for tracking and complying with client AI requirements; contributes to outside counsel guideline discussions with clients; advises on AI vendor management and data processing agreements. |
| <b>Regulatory Compliance</b>                   | Knows that the ABA, state bars, and courts are issuing guidance on AI use in legal practice; follows organizational policies.                                                                                            | Stays current on applicable rules across relevant jurisdictions; integrates compliance requirements into daily practice; identifies issues before they arise.                                                                                                      | Monitors regulatory developments; helps shape organizational compliance policies; participates in professional discussions about AI regulations.                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Transparency and Disclosure</b>             | Understands that courts, clients, and organizational policies may require disclosure of AI use in legal work.                                                                                                            | Follows disclosure protocols consistently; identifies situations where notification is required or advisable even when not strictly mandated.                                                                                                                      | Develops disclosure policies; stays current on evolving requirements; advises on disclosure strategy for novel situations.                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Fairness and Bias Vigilance</b>             | Understands that AI tools can reflect and amplify biases present in their training data, potentially affecting legal analysis and outcomes.                                                                              | Evaluates AI outputs for potential bias in research results, case assessments, and drafted materials; raises concerns when bias may affect client matters.                                                                                                         | Designs bias-checking processes for AI-assisted work; advocates for equitable AI practices in tool selection and deployment.                                                                                                                                                       |

## Pillar 5: Professional Evolution

Adapt to a rapidly changing profession by building the skills, mindset, and leadership that the AI era demands.

| COMPETENCY                                       | EMERGING                                                                                                                                                                                              | PRACTICING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | LEADING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Continuous Learning and Change Leadership</b> | Recognizes that AI tools and best practices are changing rapidly and that staying current is a professional obligation. Open to new ways of working and willing to experiment with AI in daily tasks. | Actively seeks out training, experiments with new tools, and stays current on AI developments relevant to practice area. Advocates for thoughtful AI adoption within practice groups; identifies opportunities to apply AI to unmet needs. | Builds personal learning systems; shares knowledge through internal trainings and publications; leads AI adoption efforts; serves as a bridge between technical teams and practicing lawyers; contributes to the broader professional conversation through writing, speaking, and thought leadership. |
| <b>Developing Complementary Strengths</b>        | Understands that AI is changing which skills make lawyers most valuable, and that judgment, empathy, creativity, and relationships matter more than ever.                                             | Actively develops the skills AI cannot replicate: independent legal judgment, client relationships, creative strategy, and nuanced communication. Seeks out experiences that build these capabilities.                                     | Articulates and demonstrates the evolving value proposition of lawyers in an AI era; mentors others on building complementary skills; contributes to professional discussions about the changing nature of legal work.                                                                                |
| <b>Mentoring and Knowledge Sharing</b>           | Shares useful tips, prompts, and workflow ideas with colleagues informally.                                                                                                                           | Creates shared resources (prompt libraries, workflow guides); actively helps colleagues develop AI skills; answers questions constructively.                                                                                               | Designs and delivers AI training programs; builds knowledge-sharing infrastructure; mentors junior colleagues systematically.                                                                                                                                                                         |

## Cross-Cutting Considerations

Several important themes cut across all five pillars rather than fitting neatly into one.

### Billing and Economics

In private practice, AI creates real tension around billing practices. When a task that took 4 hours now takes 30 minutes with AI assistance, how should that be billed? This implicates ethical obligations, client relationships, and law firm economics simultaneously. It touches Pillars 2, 4, and 5.

### Practice Setting Differences

An associate at a large law firm with enterprise AI tools faces different implementation challenges than a solo practitioner using consumer tools, an in-house counsel who is both user and governance decision-maker, or a public sector lawyer with a limited technology budget. The competencies in this framework are universal; how they are implemented varies by setting. See the Implementation Guidance section below for setting-specific considerations.

### Risk of Deskilling

There is legitimate concern that heavy AI reliance could prevent junior lawyers from developing core legal skills traditionally built through repetitive practice. This tension runs through every pillar. The framework addresses it directly through Pillar 3 (Critical Oversight) and the emphasis on verification as a methodology that simultaneously builds legal judgment and AI fluency.

### Speed of Change

Any framework written today may need updating within a year. This framework is designed to be durable at the competency level while remaining specific enough to be useful now. An annual review cycle is planned, with interim updates as needed.

### Assessment

Measuring AI competency is an emerging challenge. Traditional written tests cannot capture the process-oriented nature of these skills. Effective assessment approaches include simulations with realistic tasks, portfolio review of AI-assisted work, structured observation, supervisor evaluation by people who understand the tools, and validated self-assessment.

## Implementation Guidance by Practice Setting

The competencies in this framework are universal. Every lawyer needs to verify AI output, understand failure modes, and navigate confidentiality obligations regardless of where they practice. However, the tools available, governance structures, and implementation realities differ significantly by setting. The following guidance helps organizations and individuals adapt the framework to their context.

### Large Law Firms

Large firms typically have enterprise AI tools, dedicated innovation teams, and structured training programs. They also face unique challenges: outside counsel guideline restrictions from clients may limit how much associates can practice with AI on live matters; the volume of client-specific AI requirements creates significant governance complexity; and partner buy-in remains essential for training effectiveness. Focus implementation on building robust tracking systems for outside counsel guidelines, creating practice-area-specific training that embeds AI into substantive legal education, and ensuring supervising partners understand AI tools well enough to evaluate AI-assisted work product.

### Mid-Size Firms

Mid-size firms often have fewer dedicated resources for AI training and tool evaluation but may have more flexibility in adoption. They may rely on a smaller set of tools and have the advantage of tighter communication across practice groups. Focus implementation on selecting tools strategically, developing firm-wide training that a smaller team can deliver, designating AI champions who can support colleagues across practice areas, and leveraging CLE and external training resources to supplement internal efforts.

### Solo and Small Firm Practitioners

Solo and small firm lawyers are typically more self-directed in their AI adoption, using consumer-grade or smaller-scale AI products. They may have more freedom to experiment but fewer guardrails and no internal compliance infrastructure. Focus implementation on self-assessment against the framework, developing personal verification habits, understanding the security profiles of the tools being used, staying current on ethical rules, and connecting with peer networks for knowledge sharing.

### In-House Legal Departments

In-house counsel occupy a dual role: they are both users of AI tools and governance decision-makers. They may be drafting the outside counsel guidelines that external firms must follow, evaluating AI tools for the broader organization, and navigating AI-related legal risk across the business. Focus implementation on integrating AI competencies with the department's role as both practitioner and advisor, developing cross-functional relationships with technology teams, and creating governance frameworks that serve both the legal department and the organization.

### Public Interest and Government

Public interest and government lawyers may face the tightest resource constraints—limited tool budgets, fewer training opportunities, and less organizational support for AI adoption. At the same time, AI has significant potential to improve access to justice and stretch limited resources. Focus implementation on identifying the highest-impact AI applications within budget

constraints, leveraging free and low-cost tools responsibly, pursuing external training opportunities through bar associations and CLE providers, and advocating for resource investment in AI capabilities.



# Stakeholder Recommendations: How Each Part of the Profession Can Act

AI competency is a shared professional responsibility. This framework recognizes that AI readiness depends on the tools organizations provide, the training educators design, the rules regulators set, and the expectations clients communicate.

The following recommendations identify concrete actions each stakeholder group can take to help the profession develop the competencies described in this framework. They are a starting point, designed to be adapted to each stakeholder's context, resources, and priorities.

## Law Firms and Legal Employers

Law firms and legal employers control which tools are available, how training is delivered, and whether AI proficiency is valued in performance evaluations.

- **Provide structured AI onboarding** for all new attorneys covering approved tools, capabilities, limitations, and foundational AI concepts.
- **Maintain a current, accessible inventory** of approved AI tools with guidance on intended uses and restrictions.
- **Develop practice-area-specific use cases** and create reusable prompt libraries and workflow templates.
- **Build verification into workflow design** with checklists, review protocols, and sign-off procedures for AI-assisted work.
- **Train associates on verification as structured methodology**: understand and communicate about which AI tools are appropriate for each task, rigorously verify outputs, and refine the voice of the outputs to reflect the firm's perspective.
- **Ensure supervising attorneys understand AI tools** well enough to meaningfully review AI-assisted work product.
- **Establish firm-wide AI use policies** covering data handling, confidentiality, approved tools, and documentation requirements.
- **Create systematic processes for navigating outside counsel guidelines** with matter-level tracking of client restrictions.
- **Incorporate AI competency into performance evaluations** to signal that these skills are valued alongside traditional legal skills.
- **Create space for experimentation**: dedicated time, low-stakes projects, or innovation labs for trying new AI approaches.

## Law Schools and Legal Educators

Law schools shape the foundational skills, habits, and mindsets that lawyers carry throughout their careers.

- **Integrate AI literacy into the core curriculum**, not as a standalone elective. Ensure every graduate understands AI fundamentals.
- **Teach foundational concepts in context**: apply AI technologies to legal problems students are already studying.

- **Build AI-assisted exercises into existing courses:** research courses should include AI tools alongside traditional methods; writing courses should include critical evaluation of AI-assisted drafts.
- **Create simulated practice exercises** that mirror real-world AI use, including identifying errors in AI-generated work product.
- **Make critical evaluation of AI output an assessed competency.** Teach verification as a methodology, not just an obligation.
- **Integrate AI ethics into professional responsibility courses,** including the evolving duty of technological competence under Model Rule 1.1.
- **Equip faculty with AI training** so they can model responsible use and integrate AI into their teaching.
- **Emphasize the uniquely human skills** AI cannot replicate: judgment, empathy, creativity, persuasion, and trust-building.

## Bar Associations and Regulators

Bar associations and regulators set the baseline standard for professional competence and shape what lawyers understand as required versus optional.

- **Recognize AI literacy as part of the duty of competence** under Model Rule 1.1, consistent with ABA Formal Opinion 512.
- **Approve AI-focused CLE programming** that covers practical application, not just theory, and consider requiring AI-related CLE credits.
- **Issue clear, regularly updated guidance** on AI-related ethical obligations including confidentiality, disclosure, and supervisory responsibilities.
- **Issue guidance clarifying supervisory obligations** when AI tools are used in preparing legal work product.
- **Develop model policies or checklists** for verifying AI-generated content that lawyers and firms can adapt.
- **Address equity implications** of AI in the profession: uneven access to tools and training, and the risk that requirements could create new barriers.
- **Collaborate with courts** to develop consistent, workable rules for AI disclosure in litigation.
- **Plan for ongoing adaptation:** build in review cycles for AI-related rules, recognizing that both the technology and its implications are changing rapidly.

## In-House Legal Departments

In-house lawyers are simultaneously users of AI tools, governance decision-makers, and the drafters of outside counsel guidelines that shape how external firms use AI.

*As AI Users and Governance Leaders:*

- **Develop AI literacy across the legal department,** including the business context of AI tools deployed across the organization.
- **Identify high-value AI use cases** specific to your department: contract management, regulatory monitoring, internal investigations, and compliance.

- **Develop internal AI use policies** covering approved tools, data handling, confidentiality, and documentation.
- **Coordinate with procurement and IT** on AI vendor evaluations, ensuring legal requirements for data security are addressed in vendor contracts.
- **Lead cross-functional AI initiatives** connecting legal, compliance, IT, and business teams for responsible AI governance.

*As Outside Counsel Clients:*

- **Draft outside counsel guidelines for AI use** that provide meaningful guidance while accommodating evolving tools and practices.
- **Address data handling explicitly:** what data can be input into AI tools, what tools are approved, and what confidentiality protections are required.
- **Set clear expectations for verification** of AI-assisted work product and ask outside counsel about their verification protocols.
- **Expect and reward efficiency gains:** develop billing guidelines that encourage responsible AI use while ensuring fair compensation for quality work.
- **Review and update guidelines regularly** as AI technology and practice standards evolve.

## Courts and Judges

Courts are setting rules for AI use in real time through standing orders and local rules, and judges are encountering AI-generated work product in filings.

- **Invest in AI education for judges and court staff** covering capabilities, failure modes, and how AI is being used in legal practice.
- **Issue clear, consistent disclosure rules** for AI use in filings. Coordinate across jurisdictions where possible to avoid conflicting requirements.
- **Develop or endorse verification standards** for AI-assisted filings, including whether to require certification that citations have been verified.
- **Pay particular attention to AI-generated content in pro se filings**, where litigants may use AI without training or oversight.
- **Explore how AI can improve court operations:** docket management, case categorization, scheduling, and administrative efficiency.

## Professional Development Professionals and CLE Providers

PD teams and CLE providers translate the framework into the learning experiences that actually develop competencies in practice.

- **Use the framework to map existing programs** and identify gaps in current offerings. Prioritize development of programming for underserved competencies.
- **Embed AI into substantive legal training** rather than treating it as a separate topic.
- **Create hands-on exercises** that give lawyers real practice with AI tools, including verification exercises with seeded errors.
- **Develop programming specifically for supervisors** and senior attorneys who need to review AI-assisted work product.

- **Consider gamification, digital badges, and certifications** to motivate engagement and provide visible markers of progress.
- **Build in regular update mechanisms:** quarterly briefings on new developments and annual program reviews.

## Professional Liability Carriers

Carriers have a direct financial interest in AI competency and are uniquely positioned to incentivize responsible adoption.

- **Develop risk management resources** on AI-specific risks: hallucinated citations, confidentiality breaches from data input, and reliance on unverified AI analysis.
- **Provide loss prevention programming** focused on verification protocols that reduce malpractice risk when using AI tools.
- **Consider premium incentives** for firms that demonstrate robust AI governance: policies, training, verification protocols, and OCG compliance.
- **Include AI-related questions** in underwriting applications to assess how firms are managing AI risk.

## Individual Lawyers

Ultimately, every lawyer is responsible for their own competence. These recommendations offer steps any lawyer can take today.

- **Self-assess honestly** against the framework's proficiency levels. Identify where you are strong and where you have gaps.
- **Invest time in understanding how AI works**, not just how to use specific tools. Foundational understanding helps you adapt as tools change.
- **Experiment in low-stakes contexts first:** internal research, drafting outlines, summarizing documents for your own use.
- **Build verification into your personal workflow** as a non-negotiable habit. Form your own analysis first, use AI second, then reconcile.
- **Stay current on ethical rules** governing AI use in your jurisdiction. Check for client-specific restrictions on every matter.
- **When in doubt, disclose.** Err on the side of transparency about AI use with clients, courts, and colleagues.
- **Continue developing the skills AI cannot replicate:** judgment, empathy, creativity, persuasion, and the ability to build trust.
- **Contribute to the professional conversation:** write, speak, mentor, and share your experiences.

## A Note on Using These Recommendations

We encourage each stakeholder group to:

- **Inventory current efforts:** What are you already doing that develops AI competencies? Where are the biggest gaps?
- **Prioritize:** Which 3–5 recommendations would have the greatest impact in your context?
- **Set a timeline:** Commit to specific actions within 6 and 12 months.
- **Revisit regularly:** AI is evolving rapidly. Review your progress and adjust priorities at least annually.

The AI competency challenge is too large for any single stakeholder to solve alone. But if each part of the profession takes concrete steps, the collective effect will be transformative.